

11. TOURISM TRANSPORTATION

Boston's historic sites, cultural and educational institutions, vibrant performing arts, and thriving waterfront make it one of the premier tourist destinations in the country. Millions of visitors come to Boston for vacations, business, conferences and special events, contributing to the city's economy.

This chapter focuses on **parking and routing for tour buses (including school buses), and tourist trolleys**. These vehicles account for a significant portion of visitor transportation, with tour buses alone bringing millions of visitors to Boston annually. Tourism transportation is currently **regulated by many public agencies**. An evaluation of their respective roles is key to encouraging the expansion of the tourism industry in the coming decade.

The chapter is a preview of report of the Mayor's Tourism Transportation Task Force that will be released in 2003.

Tourism Transportation Task Force

Mayor Thomas M. Menino convened the Task Force in July 2001 to support the tourism industry through effective management of the transportation network serving visitor destinations and attractions. Meeting attendees and contributors have included tour bus and tourist trolley company operators, bus drivers, tour-guide representatives, managers of destination sites like museums, neighborhood and advocacy groups and relevant federal, state and city agencies. The Boston Transportation Department and Move Massachusetts chair the Task Force.

Since the Task Force was convened in 2001, its membership has focused its activities on:

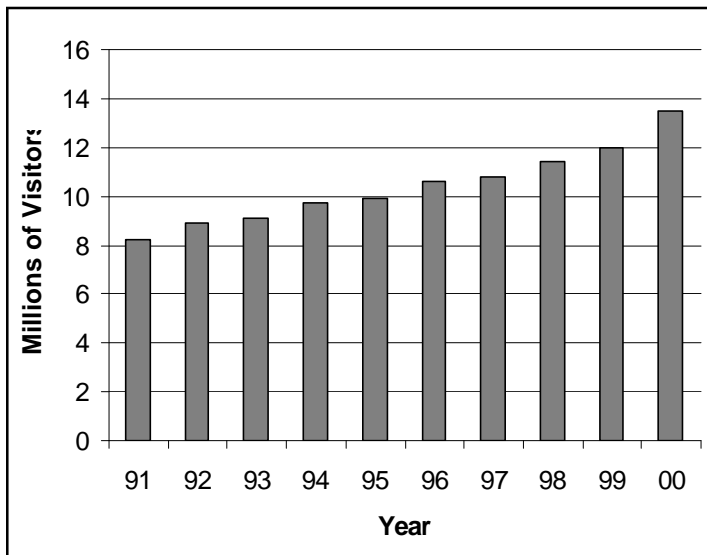
- **Evaluating existing operations:** Analysis of the location of parking and routes currently used by tourism vehicles and of the plethora of regulations that apply to the industry.
- **Undertaking comparative analysis:** Review and evaluation of the experience of other cities and sites.
- **Proposing long-term recommendations:** Development of an action plan that will foster a more comprehensive and organized approach to tourism transportation for the coming decade.
- **Initiating immediate steps:** Implementation of short-term steps to achieve tangible results and to mitigate Central Artery construction impacts.

TASK FORCE MISSION

The Mayor's Tourism Transportation Task Force's primary goal is to manage the growth of tourism and to protect the quality of life in the neighborhoods adjacent to visitor attractions.

- Identify drop-off/pick up parking locations for tour and school buses, tourist trolleys and "ducks."
- Identify opportunities for off-street layover parking.
- Protect residents from excessive tourism-related impacts.
- Identify routes for tour buses and trolleys that respect the traffic flow needs of the city's streets.
- Propose effective enforcement and regulatory policies and procedures.
- Improve tourism vehicle operations through improved communication and information sharing technologies.
- Incorporate the emergence of new destination sites and the expansion of the tourism industry.

Figure 28 – Estimated Number of Visitors to Boston



Source: Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Tourism Economy

Tourism is critical to Boston's economy. The Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau (GBCVB) estimates that approximately 13.5 million domestic and international visitors came to Greater Boston with an economic impact of over \$7 billion in 2000 (see Figure 28). Domestic visitors, most coming from the northeastern United States, account for 90% of all visitors to Boston. The average visitor to Boston travels no more than five or six hours and stays for three to four days. The number of visitors to Boston is expected to increase, especially with the construction of a new convention center.

Of all domestic travel to Massachusetts, approximately 43% is to the Greater Boston area. However, Greater Boston has the lowest annual percentage (8.4%) of visitors from Massachusetts.

Visitation

Boston's attraction rests on its well-preserved historic districts and buildings, its cultural assets and its retail and entertainment districts. The Museum of Science, the Museum of Fine Arts, the New England Aquarium, the Boston National Historic Park and the Freedom Trail are staples of Boston's visitor experience, each receiving more than one million visitors in 2000 (see Table 20). The majority of Boston's highly frequented tourist and visitor destinations are concentrated in a small number of downtown neighborhoods that are easily traversed on foot. The most heavily patronized establishment is Faneuil Hall Marketplace.

Boston is also home to the Red Sox Major League Baseball team at Fenway Park and the Bruins National Hockey League and the Celtics National Basketball Association teams at the Fleet Center. In the coming decade Boston will continue to grow as a tourist destination with the addition of several new attractions and the expansion of existing facilities. These include:

- The Central Artery air-rights parkland corridor.
- Roxbury Heritage State Park and New England Zoo.
- Prudential Center and Huntington Avenue.
- Theatre District and Park Plaza.
- South Boston Waterfront and Convention Center

Table 20 –Tourist Destination Visitations

ATTRACTION	ANNUAL VISITATIONS IN 2000
Museum of Science ¹	1,687,000
Charlestown Navy Yard ²	1,591,000
Museum of Fine Arts ¹	1,359,000
New England Aquarium ¹	1,252,000
USS Constitution and Constitution Museum ²	956,000
Old North Church ²	609,000
USS Cassin Young ²	407,000
Boston African American National Historic Sites ²	393,000
Children's Museum ³	377,000
Trinity Church ³	350,000
Boston Common Visitors Center ³	343,000
Zoo New England – Franklin Park Zoo ¹	286,000
Paul Revere House ²	228,000
John F. Kennedy Museum & Library ³	226,000
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum ³	212,000
Bunker Hill Monument ²	197,000
Boston Tea Party Ship and Museum ³	119,000
Old South Meeting House ²	79,000
McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College ³	77,000
Institute of Contemporary Art ³	75,000
Old State House Museum ²	73,000

Sources: 1. Museum of Science
 2. National Park Service
 2001 Book of Lists, Boston Business Journal, 1999 Cour

Agency Responsibilities

The public control of the tourism-related vehicles is distributed among several city and state agencies. City agencies have a significant role in protecting residential areas from excessive tourism transportation impacts.

Stops, Stands and Layover Locations

BTD designates on-street tour bus drop-off/pick-up and parking sites and signs them accordingly. The Boston Police Department (BPD), in consultation with BTD, oversees the permitting and designation of stops and stands for tourist trolleys and “ducks.”

Enforcement

BPD is the only department authorized to enforce moving violations. Its Hackney Division determines the number of tourist trolleys and “ducks” approved to travel on city streets. Both BPD and BTD can enforce parking regulations.

The Boston Environment Department through the *Boston Air Pollution Control Commission* has the authority to issue citations for violations of the five-minute idling regulation. This regulation prohibits motor vehicles that are parked on a public way from idling their engine for more than five minutes.

Operator and Vehicle Licenses

BPD licenses all tourist trolleys and certifies trolley drivers, including periodic driver background and qualification checks.

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles issues Commercial Driver’s Licenses for operators of tour buses and tourist trolleys and license plates for those vehicles registered in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy (DTE), Transportation Division issues permits for common carriers to operate on specified routes within the Commonwealth, with each application requiring municipal street licenses for each route. It is also responsible for the safety of equipment and operation of over 250 companies and for the inspection and road tests of 3,000 tour buses.



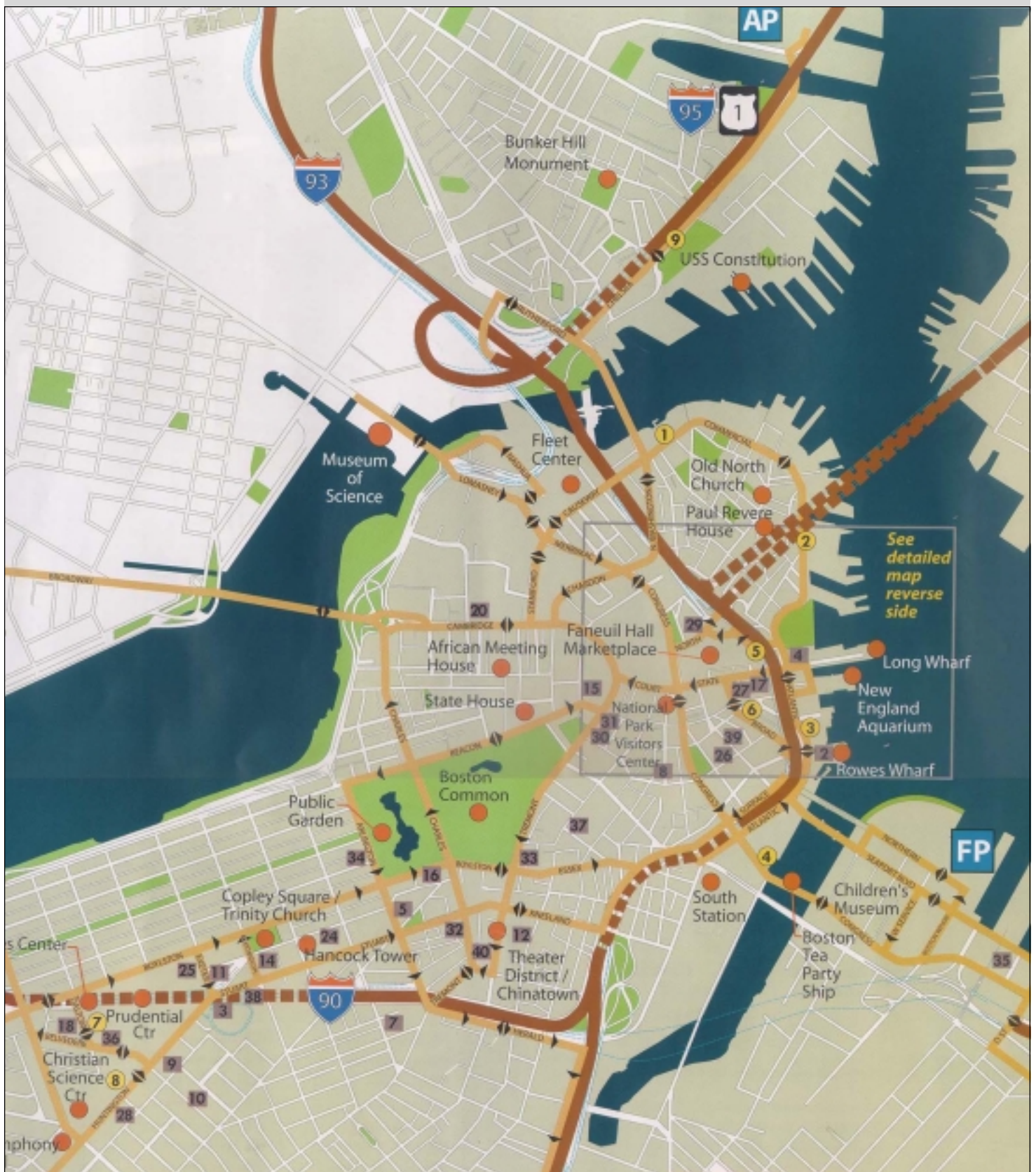
Tour buses are typically 40 foot long over-the-road motor coaches that can seat up to 55 passengers.



Tourist trolleys provide sightseeing tours in Boston. The vehicles are approximately 30 feet long and can accommodate up to 40 seated passengers.



Boston Duck Tours uses World War II vintage amphibious vehicles to provide tours in Boston and on the Charles River. The vehicles are 32 feet long and can accommodate up to 32 seated passengers.



Source: Von Grossman & Company

Figure 29:
Extract from the 2002 Tour Bus Parking Guide released by the
Boston Transportation Department

Tour Bus Parking

Boston-based and out-of-town tour operators typically drop their passengers as a single group adjacent to a tourist destination. After a wait of several hours at a layover parking facility, the tour bus picks up the group at a pre-determined stop and time. Tour groups are usually 40 to 45 persons. Buses are usually allowed a maximum of 15 minutes parking at curbside drop-off/pick-up stops. Layover or long-term parking locations are ideally located off-street.

Tours usually access multiple destinations within the city, using designated drop-off/pick-up locations. Commonly linked destinations include the USS Constitution in Charlestown, the North End, and Faneuil Hall/Quincy Market. These trips occur year round, but are most prevalent during the summer and autumn months. The peak is September-October, during the fall foliage season. Other types of trips are oriented toward single destinations. These include school trips to the Christian Science Center, the Museum of Science, and the New England Aquarium. The peak is in the late spring at the end of the school year. Other popular destinations include the Theater District and Copley Square.

Tour Bus Drop-off/Pick-up Locations

The distribution of drop-off/pick-up sites with respect to tourist destinations is key to tourism visitation. The following location criteria have been identified by the Task Force:

- **On-site drop-off/pick-up parking is preferred.** Destination facilities should accommodate and manage this function on off-street property to the extent possible.
- **On-street drop-off/pick-up parking priorities.** If on-site options are not available, BTM designates on-street locations based on proximity to destination, impacts on local residents and businesses, and traffic conditions in the area.
- **Expansion to new tourist areas is encouraged.** Destinations beyond the downtown neighborhoods such as the Roxbury Heritage State Park and the Huntington Avenue corridor should be included in planning for parking and routing.

For 2002 tour bus drop-off/pick-up locations were designated at Broad Street and the Surface Artery near Quincy Market, at Commercial Street in the North End, Chelsea Street near the Charlestown Navy Yard, Congress Street near the Children's Museum and along Huntington Avenue.



BTM worked with the Tourism Transportation Task Force to prepare a tour bus map. The map, which will be updated and distributed on an annual basis, provides the most current information about drop-off/pick-up areas affected by Central Artery/Tunnel construction. (Source Von Grossman & Company)

BUS IDLING REGULATIONS

Massachusetts law and regulation prohibit unnecessary idling of bus engines. Chapter 90, section 16A and 310 CMR 7.11 requires a bus driver to shut off the bus engine if the bus is going to be stopped for more than five minutes. Idling engines, especially diesel engines, emit significant amounts of pollution posing air quality and health risks. Idling also wastes fuel and money. Significant fines are imposed by enforcement personnel for vehicles that violate the anti-idling rule.

Through its *Tour Bus Guidelines* brochure, BTM informs drivers that idling beyond the five minute time limit makes them subject to a \$500 fine.

TOUR BUS LAYOVER SITES

In 2002 off-street tour bus layover facilities were established at the **Boston Autoport** in Charlestown and on **Fan Pier**. These facilities are privately operated and charge a fee for bus parking. This allows bus drivers a location to park the tour buses during the intervals the passengers are visiting Boston. Each facility is within close proximity to major tourist destinations and the regional highway system.

Future consideration should be given to creating a **permanent tour bus facility** with capabilities to control tour bus operations and direct how tour buses enter and operate within Boston. The facility could include a central control facility that would function like an air traffic control tower by spacing how buses arrive at the drop-off/pick-up locations near attractions.

In addition to the current two locations, consideration should be given to a **South Bay** site that could be developed as part of a larger intermodal center that could include remote parking and transit access.

Tour Bus Layover Parking Locations

Typically a tour of tourists or school children lasts several hours. Since there is no provision for parking tour buses for that length of time on city streets near the attraction (the curb being used for drop-off/pick-up activity) there is a need for adequate and convenient layover facilities on off-street sites. In the absence of such sites, tour buses often park illegally on neighborhood streets. The Task Force evaluated over a dozen potential off-street layover sites with respect to the following criteria:

- **Access and proximity.** The ability to travel conveniently between tourist destinations and layover parking using minimally disruptive routes.
- **Compatibility.** The accommodation of tour bus parking while maintaining a positive relationship with adjacent land uses and impacted communities.
- **Oversight and capacity:** The supervision of the site throughout the day and its ability to accommodate projected tour and school bus volumes.

The Task Force identified Boston Autoport in Charlestown and Fan Pier in South Boston as the primary layover sites for the 2002 season. **Boston Autoport** is managed privately under a long-term lease with Massport. The site already serves as an automobile distribution center, is near the Navy Yard, North End and Quincy Market, and has fueling and repair facilities. **Fan Pier**, a privately owned site slated for development in the near future, is currently a surface parking lot. There is capacity on-site to accommodate tour buses, many of which are parking illegally on Northern Avenue along the site's southern edge. Excellent access to tourist destinations along Boston's waterfront makes this site attractive for layover uses.

To pursue long-term options a number of **additional sites** have been identified on a preliminary basis. They include land area under the new Central Artery along Albany Street, parcels in the Newmarket area, the South Bay Mall and the Bunker Hill Community College parking lot. Each of these sites requires further communication with property owners.

Tourist Trolleys and “Ducks” Parking

Tourist trolleys provide “hop-on, hop-off” service to their passengers. As a result, trolleys generally make many *stops* with a few passengers boarding at each location. Trolleys also require *stands*, or staging sites at tour termini for schedule and fleet management. Typically, patrons buy their tickets from booths located in hotel lobbies and areas frequented by tourists like Quincy Market, the Aquarium, Boston Common and the Prudential Center mall.

The “ducks” in contrast provide tours with boarding allowed only at *stands*, or at their terminus facility. Currently the “ducks” are located on private off-street property between the Prudential Center and Boylston Street.

BTD and the Boston Police Department allocate routes and stands and stops for trolleys and “ducks” based on the following criteria:

- **Distribute stands.** To enhance coverage and access, stands and stops are designated near tourist destinations throughout the city.
- **Require on-site stands.** Where ever possible, trolley operators should locate their stand facilities off-street, ideally within destination and/or hotel property.
- **Promote equity in stand designation.** To the extent that stands are on-street they are made available equally to all operators.
- **Reduce sidewalk congestion.** Consolidate ticket sale booths to reduce obstruction of sidewalks.
- **Recognize emerging tourist destinations.** Evaluate current trolley routes to encourage access to under-served tourist destinations.

The “ducks” are scheduled to be displaced from their current off-street location in 2003. The City of Boston is currently working with all concerned groups in evaluating a number of proposed private sites and, if necessary, on-street sites. They are located in the Quincy Market and Back Bay districts.

The proximity of tourist trolley and “ducks” stands to tour bus drop-off/pick-up sites is useful as many bus tours include trolley rides. Ticketing facilities in buildings adjacent to these parking locations will further improve the coordination of tourism transportation activities.

SHORE EXCURSION

Shore excursions are typically provided for cruise liner passengers when a liner visits a port. Boston is a growing cruise liner destination and as a result then number of shore excursions will increase. These excursions frequently involve transporting passengers around via a motorcoach to major tourist destinations in the city.

Most of the ships calling on Boston can carry more than 1,000 passengers with some carrying more than 2,000 passengers. Many cruises will have seven or eight different shore excursions. Because all cruise liners dock at the Black Falcon Terminal, if several liners arrive the same day and offer several different shore excursions, the result could be upwards of 20 buses departing and arriving through South Boston in a short period of time.

A survey of current shore excursions offered by liners visiting the Port of Boston include excursions to Concord, Lexington, Marblehead, Salem, Gloucester, the JFK Library, Plymouth, in addition to the many areas in downtown Boston. While these tours are not frequent and only occur several months out of a year, they result in a period of high activity following the arrival of the ship in port and a high period of activity when before the ship departs.



Cruise ships are increasingly calling on Boston as a port of call.
(Photo: Massport)

Action Plan:

Tourism Transportation

Release Yearly Tour Bus Parking Guide

Using the Tour Bus Parking Guide for 2002 as a model the City will release a yearly map designating tour bus drop-off/pick-up and layover parking locations.

Develop a Comprehensive Tourism Parking Strategy for the Next Decade

The City and the Tourism Transportation Task Force will develop a long-term (post artery-construction) strategy designating parking locations for tour buses, tourist trolleys and “ducks” to enhance access to Boston’s tourism districts. The plan, which was initiated in 2002, will:

- Designate tour bus drop-off/pick up locations for Quincy Market, the waterfront, North End, Fort Point District, Charlestown Navy Yard, and Huntington Avenue.
- Establish off-street tourist trolley and “duck” stands in the Quincy Market/Waterfront and Back Bay districts.
- Encourage the use of private off-street tour bus layover parking facilities. Facilities at the Boston Autoport and Fan Pier were identified for the 2002 season.

Explore New Regulatory and Communication Strategies.

To improve the day-to-day functioning of tourism transportation services concerned city and state agencies will investigate opportunities to:

- Expand the activities of the current inter-agency enforcement team which enforces illegal tour bus parking, idling and use of designated tourism parking by other vehicles.
- Establish a Tourism Transportation staff position to coordinate discreet departmental functions.
- Develop a *tour-guide* testing and licensing program.

Support Emerging Tourism Destinations and Districts

Tour bus and tourist trolley operators are encouraged to expand their routes to under-served and emerging tourism centers outside the downtown. These include the Roxbury Heritage State Park, Zoo New England, the Arnold Arboretum, JFK Library, the museums along Huntington Avenue, the Boston Harbor Island National Park and the South Boston waterfront.